The Goodness of God

George T. Knight

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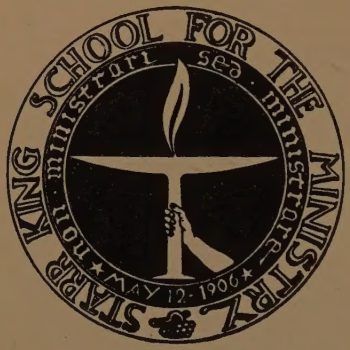

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THE GOODNESS OF GOD

IN VIEW OF THE FACTS OF NATURE AND THE SUPERNATURAL

BY

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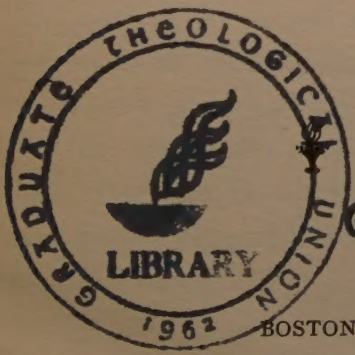

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PREFACE.

It is the opinion of the compiler of the following pages that the times can make good use of whatever truth there is in the philosophy of Optimism.

Acknowledgment is due James Sully, whose *History of Pessimism* (Henry King & Co., London, 1877) is so thoro, clear and fair, both in the record of facts and in the treatment of them, as almost to discourage other attempts at any part of the subject.

I am also under obligations to my associate, Professor W. S. Woodbridge, for wise and kindly suggestions, in the preparation of this volume.

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THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

INTRODUCTION.

THE substance and course of thought in this book may be stated as follows:

The doctrine that God is entirely good has been disputed on two grounds — first, his works contain an element of evil, and secondly, some of his attributes are not in every respect consistent with goodness in the ordinary meaning of the term. We wish to examine these grounds and ascertain their full significance.

The consideration of the first ground gives rise to what has long been called *the problem of evil.* Its question is, How can a good God be the author of this world, in which evil is so large a part? Many have undertaken to answer the question by some theory or view of the world, by which they think its Author may be defended. Any such

theory or proof of God's goodness is technically called a *theodicy*, or justification of God.

In order to understand the best thought on this great subject, and to clarify our own thought, it seems well first to study the history of the problem of evil, or rather of men's solutions of the problem; in short, the history of theodicy.

After a brief survey of that field, we shall gather all the strength of pessimistic theories of the world, all that can be or has been said against the character of nature in one indictment against God's goodness — let the worst be said.

Next we shall try to estimate the actual value of this indictment, and shall offer some considerations in rebuttal, and thus set forth the particulars of the latest theodicy. This will constitute the defenses of optimism as conceived in the most advanced reasonings of the day.

Secondly, in studying the remaining ground of objection to the goodness of God, we shall observe the subject in relation

to the divine attributes, in its general theological setting. The whole we believe to be not only a true view of the divine character, but a real support and confirmation of Christian faith hope and love.

I.

THE CHARACTER OF GOD AS SEEN IN HIS WORKS.

1. THE HISTORY OF THEODICY.

Hesiod gave expression to one of the earliest speculations which have influenced the thought of men in their attempt to solve the problem of evil. He represented the course of human history from the Golden Age, through the Silver and Brass to the Iron Age, as a decline caused by an evil fate which somehow constrained both gods and men. — But to attribute evil to fate is to acquit the gods; and such was, to some extent, the intention of the very early Greeks. In this was a beginning of theodicy.

According to *the Prometheus Legend*, the

Titans were rude nature spirits, and the gods were upholders of world-order and reason. The two races were at war, and man, weaker than both, had scant consideration until Prometheus, a demi-god, took man's part, and procured for him the divine fire as a means of contending against the powers of nature. That made Zeus angry, and he punished both Prometheus and man with many evils; until Hercules arose and set free Prometheus, but did not release man.—This, in the opinion of some critics, is a way of saying that evil is incident to civilization and to the ambition of men; but men at length obtain divine help, and themselves grow up to great power, and at last are able to conquer many evils, though not all of them.

Plato and Aristotle saw in matter or "not-being" the material of which the world was made; but the material is intractable. God, who is altogether good, does as well as can be done with the stuff he has to work with. Plato had perhaps the first clearly intended theodicy.

The Stoics had two theodicies. They some-

times denied the existence of evil. Aurelius said: "All events turn out justly, and — if you will but observe nicely — there is a sovereign distribution of justice which gives everything its due." Accordingly many in all times have thought to destroy evil by boldly facing it, to annihilate it by the magic of words or the power of will — and to some extent they succeed, for many evils (not all) are in our thinking so.

Secondly, they sometimes conceded the existence of evils, but justified them as useful or necessary means, or unavoidable incidents, in the accomplishment of a good purpose in the world.

One conception of the Stoic has become the stock in trade of all theodicy of later times. He thought of evil as having that relation to the perfection of the world, which the discord note has in the perfection of harmony, or which the shadow has in the picture to bring out its brightness. Thus evil by itself, as it is not, is evil; and taken in connection with other things, as it is, it is good.

The Hindu cosmology represented this world as an evil dream of Brahma, or again, as a waking fancy with which he amuses himself for a while. — But an evil principle in Brahma manifestly destroys all theodicy.

Philosophers, however, must have a theodicy; therefore they called attention to the transitory nature of dreams and to their unreality, and so tried to say that evils are only in imagination after all; they are only illusions, they do not really exist. But, as if they perceived the shallowness of such reasoning, they offered an additional explanation of evil fortune of men as due to a former state of sin, and as exactly proportioned to our deserts acquired in that former existence. This was a theodicy again.

According to Buddha this life is evil. There is in his scheme no theodicy, because there is no God to be justified. There is, however, Karma (fate or justice), which metes out to every man the exact measure of his deserts in a process of transmigration or metempsychosis.

The Persians said, "In the beginning was

a pair of twins": Good and Evil. The works of Ahriman are always evil, and the works of Ahura Mazda (or Ormuzd) are always good. This is dualism. — Were it not for certain signs of unity in the world, which philosophy and science have seen, the Persian must be regarded as the perfect theodicist. But, in later times, the followers of Zoroaster have themselves seen the necessity of monotheism, and have found themselves obliged to give up essential dualism.

The Gnostics were of two kinds, one dualistic and not essentially different from the Persian dualists, and the other monotheistic. According to the latter, the original One is perfect in all respects and overflowing with goodness. But this very overflow going forth in all directions and moving away from its original source becomes thereby weaker and less perfect in proportion to its distance from the center. So it is that the activities of those farthest away and most defective are evil and the source of evil. In their theory, God is not evil, but our being away from him is evil. Many of them also foresaw the time

when all should return to the One and dwell with him in righteousness and light forever.

They also supported their faith with the doctrine of transmigration of souls — a doctrine which seems to have lived on its convenience for theodicy.

Other pagan theories have had so little influence on modern opinions that they may be omitted from this account, unless we should include the Norse cosmology, in which the origin of evil is attributed to the evil will of some god (Loki) or of the giants who are the enemies of the gods, while the great gods are regarded as predominantly good, and one or more of them as altogether good. Among Norsemen, also, the time is foretold when evil shall be destroyed and all (the living) shall dwell with Balder the Good.

The Old Testament. — In the Genesis narrative the beginnings of evil are in the malice of the Serpent or Satan who led our first parents to sin and thus brought all evils upon the race of men. This account seemed to leave God free from blame, and has been the pith of most of the Christian theories unto this day.

The original simplicity of the theory had to be modified when men came to see that the individual fortunes of men (which are subject to the will of God) are not justly and equitably distributed. As early as the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, there was further thought on the subject. A great epoch in the discussion was the didactic poem of Job. Scarcely has another mind perceived so clearly and stated so courageously and justly the difficulties of the problem, and set forth so largely and wisely the struggles of the human mind towards a solution.

The author of Job beholds the inequality in God's dealing with men, and that, in an extreme case, even a wise and good man faithful and pious toward God, is yet grievously afflicted, "deprived of his right," "persecuted with the strong hand" of God. But Job's faith and virtue are so great that he endures even injustice with patience, though he cries out for an explanation, and in the end attains a kind of triumph of fortitude, and a blessing. But his very reasonable prayer is not answered, except that God is great and con-

trols all things, and man is small and cannot receive the desired explanation.

Job does not furnish a demonstrated or reasoned theodicy; he has only an *assertion* that God is good, contrary to the evidence which is candidly seen and stated.

Observe also that this candor is apparently commended by God (see the last chapter), while the less sincere and lame defenses of God by Job's friends (the professional theologians) are condemned and rebuked, and the authors of them are told to go and make their peace with God through Job. Are we not also to infer that his prophetic function is attained in part by his bitter experience faithfully endured, and that when, in the performance of that function, Job prays for his friends, he is thereby himself perfected or at least restored to the favor of God?

Job's wisdom, however, to which he had come, was "dumb resignation," he "lays his hand on his mouth." But men will not consent to that, and therefore the "Preacher" bursts forth into words again, and the pessimists and the optimists are with us to this

day. Because miseries are ever new, men either despair, or if hope be not dead they cry out, like Job, to be enabled to perceive the justice of God.

The New Testament. — The Man of Sorrows, acquainted with grief, fully recognized the existence of evil, and at last submitted to it unto death. Yet he also did not venture to explain it so that we might see that God is good, and thus have a theodicy. He did, however, advance the theory some definite steps in clearness at least. First (a lesson the world very much needed to learn, and which it still refuses to see clearly) calamity is not primarily the punishment for sin (though secondarily it may become so in many instances); but its primary purpose is discipline, that man may see God. Of the blind he says: "Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, that he should be born blind, but that the works of God might be manifest in him." Therefore Jesus proceeds to work the works of God and to heal the afflicted — whereby at the same time the carping critics are judged, the blind receives

his sight, bodily and spiritually, and many are converted or confirmed in the faith.

It is rather by his authority, by example of absolute faith, and by works, that he affirms the goodness of God in spite of evil, and declares the ultimate triumph of righteousness.[1]

In Paul, evil is somehow connected with Adam's sin; and specifically, moral evil is man's choice, and physical evil is a divinely appointed means of discipline by which God will accomplish a greater glory, and all evils shall in the wisdom and love of God be overruled unto his gracious and saving purposes.

In the Church. — The Bible, as we have seen, bases theodicy on faith and authority. But men were not satisfied, they demanded to walk by sight, the sorrows of this world were so great. So the Fathers sought to relieve the strain by enlarging the vision of the "future life in which all wrongs shall be righted." Neither did this satisfy them, for it confessed that there are wrongs after all, and they are unexplained.

The Fathers also resorted to pagan phil-

[1] Caird, *Evol. and Relig.*, Vol. II., p. 111.

osophies. Origen thought he saw light in the doctrine that evil is negative in its metaphysical nature, and is therefore not so serious a thing to deal with as it might be if it were positive. Why a good God does not at once dispose of evil by a miraculous fiat is explained by transmigration and the free choice of man, who insists on being evil for a while. Therefore, said Origen, the ills we endure are merely the just punishment of the sins we have done here or heretofore. God is entirely just.

Theodore of Mopsuestia thought evil a practically necessary incident in the evolution or education of a race of free moral beings. It is, however, a temporary condition out of which, and by means of which, the individual will at length be raised to a permanent righteous life.

Augustine used several devices, inconsistently. Like Origen, he taught that evil is only negative anyhow; and supported by authority as he supposed, he said our ill-fortune is merited not alone by our own sin in a former transmigration state, or in

Adam, but by inheritance from Adam. Thus man (primarily Satan) was the author of sin, and all other evil is natural consequence or due punishment of sin. Then, by throwing some metaphysical dust into the air, the remaining difficulties were concealed; and so God was supposed to be justified in the sight of men.

One other principle is used more or less in nearly all theodicies since Augustine, though often unconsciously. Indeed, it was to be found also among the pagans. It was derived from the relations of the absolute monarch among men to the laws of his empire. Thus, the human maker of laws is, of course, above them, and can unmake them at his will. He makes them for his inferiors; he himself is not responsible to them. So the pagan myths often represent the gods as doing what is forbidden to men, yet without crime or guilt, because they have a privilege or divine right above law.

Similarly the Christians came some day to the thought of an "Absolute God" who is above moral laws, for he cannot be *subject* to

any; and what he does is right, because he does it and wills it to be, and to be right. This doctrine appears in various forms in Duns Scotus, Calvin, Grotius, Edwards, and Emmons; and if I mistake not, is the subconscious justification of God in much that common Christians say and think about him.

In modern times, with advancing intelligence, men are struggling all the more with the problem of evil. All the old devices, and some new inventions of men are put in requisition that we may be able to say without a blush, that God is good. Dualism still has influence in the doctrine that Satan, not God, is the responsible author of all evil; but the works of Satan are now less prominent in theology than of old. To a limited extent also, we still hear that evil is merited by men, on the theory of transmigration or of heredity, or that men have no rights at all, being quite worthless: Man is but a worm, or a bubble, or dust.

Still less often, perhaps, do we hear that "God, to be sure, is the author of all evil,

but he is above morals, and whatever he does is right because he does it." Yet the shadow, at least, of the old doctrine remains. Men are accustomed to hold, as a general proposition or first principle, that God is wholly good; and therefore what he does, though it seem to men wicked beyond compare, is somehow certainly right and good. Such is the confidence in this thought and the peace in its possession, that men often refuse to discuss whether that which they have said of God is not really foolish and blasphemous, because as they repeat, we are sure of one thing: "God is good, and that is enough."

Others, perhaps more solicitous for the honor of God than for truth among men, point out that in one part or another of theodicy as it is, all manner of evil is said against God falsely and wickedly. They are moved therefore, in the interests of piety and of human welfare, to cry out against attempts to think about God. So, more than ever as light increases, it would seem that a rational defense of God is needed.

Many of the would-be theodicies are based in an attempt to minimize evil. Great men have tried to argue evil out of existence, or even to talk it out of existence. Some still declare that evil is negative. Others get a clue from Spinoza, who taught that the ideas of good and evil are merely subjective, merely our way of looking at things, and the distinction between them does not exist in fact. It may be noted that this theory does not form a theodicy, for, since by its assumption *just* is an unreal notion, God cannot be called just in the very fact. The theory may, however, deny that he is unjust, which is to say that he is neutral: moral notions do not apply to him.

A similar theory was put forward by Dr. Hodge, and many others. They have taught that pain is an illusion, that all evil is simply in our point of view, it is really good; and when we see things aright, we shall see that all is good. Royce quotes from Lanier a happy illustration of the doctrine, that he who has love in his heart

can find no ill: "Love is like an electric light going about in search of a shadow."

But to follow further in this line would be to study mental pathology rather than theology, yet a few quotations may be allowed. For a moment perhaps, and in a sense, some have believed that "sorrow is better than laughter," and that "the woes of men are the work of their own hands." Is it possible that Hartley believed that "all men are supremely happy?" How many of the Stoics of ancient days or their imitators among the Christians of these days, actually succeed in rising above pain, or in persuading themselves that evil does not exist? Did Dr. Hodge *really* think that "sin is an advantage to the universe?" And do all the theologians who have sounded the praise of sin — their name is legion — sleep well o' nights, when they remember what they have said?

There is some evidence that they do not wholly believe their own words, for when certain classes of men — be they great like Rousseau, or mean like a less "fortunate"

criminal — attempt to put in practice the theory that "evil is good and there are no moral distinctions," they are promptly condemned even by the apologists of evil, and sometimes punished, just as if they were really *guilty* — which is to confess that evil is a real thing after all, and is not an advantage.

Leibnitz. — Probably the main current of rational theodicy has its modern source in Leibnitz. He strove mightily with the subject, yet he came to the ordinary judgment that God is not the author of evil in any sense, but *allows evil because he must* allow it in order to certain good ends which he is working out. God has done the best that could be done, and so is altogether just. This is not the doctrine of Plato (that God is limited by some refractory material which he uses), nor of the dualists (that he is limited by some other God), nor yet of the Absolutists who teach that God is not limited even to the possible. It is, however, consistent with the rational doctrine of omnipotence; for it holds that to avoid evil entirely was impossible even to God, and to

say that God could not avoid it, is merely to say that he could not do the impossible. So they "save his goodness by sacrificing his omnipotence."

Leibnitz, however, had not clearly seen the whole of the rational theory; he seems to have held that physical evil is the consequence of moral evil and its due punishment.

Professor Royce has championed a theory which must be noted. He says that Job's problem, on Job's presuppositions (transcendental theism) is insoluble. Job must say that God is either cruel or helplessly weak. But Job is right in demanding a rational answer to his question. The answer is: "You are one with God, a part of his life; he is the very soul of your soul, therefore when you suffer, *your sufferings are God's sufferings*, his own personal woe. In you God suffers precisely as you do, and has all your concern in overcoming this grief. The true question is, Why does God suffer? The sole possible necessary and sufficient answer is: Because without suffering, without ill, without woe, evil trag-

edy, God's life would not be perfected. This grief is not a physical means to an external end; it is a logically necessary and eternal constituent of the divine life. — He is perfect. His world is the best possible world. Yet all its finite regions know not only joy but defeat and sorrow, for thus alone in the completeness of eternity can he be triumphantly perfect."[1]

This author, following Hegel, has taught that struggle, antagonism of opposites, is the very essence of life, even of the divine life itself; thus the world which is God manifest, and we who are really portions of God, must in the nature of the case go through the terrors of life in order to its blessings; God himself cannot otherwise live and be perfect.

Here is essentially the old theory of the Greeks. God is good and desires to do good only, but the strong hand of Fate is laid on him; and it is the very doctrine of Job: God is "helplessly weak," yet he does the best he can. Royce, however,

[1] *Studies of Good and Evil*, p. 14.

brings out more vividly the sympathy of God with the griefs of men. And such a God is immensely more available for the purpose of religion.

Pessimism. — If religion actually began in fear, as some hold, it would seem that pessimism is the original doctrine, is older than optimism. There are still found those who believe in evil gods but not in good ones. Some of the advocates of this theory are among the latest developments of civilization,[1] and some are savages in darkest Africa or Asia.

There is also a form of thought which may be called *practical pessimism*, and which is the natural outcome of an evil life. Shakespeare represents Macbeth as saying, when his tragedy draws near its close.

> "And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
> The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
> Life's but a walking shadow ; a poor player
> That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
> And then is heard no more : it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

[1] Schopenhauer, Hartmann, etc.

There is a similar order of thought which is not so thoroughgoing in doctrine. Its advocates may be classed as agnostics. They include many called by that name in another connection, Hume, Huxley, F. A. Lange, for examples. They despair of attaining truth, conviction, faith. They are represented in philosophy and in common life. Philosophically, they speak as Omar:[1]

"Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed
Of two Worlds so wisely — they are thrust
Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to scorn
Are scattered, and their Mouths are stopped with Dust.

Myself when young did eagerly frequent
Doctor and Saint and heard great Argument
About it and about; but evermore
Came out by the same Door wherein I went."

Again, representing the practical tendency of this kind of life, the same author writes:

"The Grape that can with Logic absolute
The two and seventy jarring Sects confute,
The sovereign Alchemist that in a Trice
Life's leaden Metal into Gold transmute."

[1] *Rubaiyat*, xxvi, xxvii, and lix.

There is also the type of the frivolous and empty, represented in the words of a distinguished Frenchman:

La vie est vaine :
Un peu d'amour,
Un peu de haine —
Et puis — bonjour!

La vie est brève :
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve —
Et puis — bonsoir!

Such is probably the mood of mind of a large number of "worldly" people in France and elsewhere, but it is not ordinarily possible to the strong and thoughtful. It is a sign of weakness, and leads toward insanity.

Summary. — Theodicies classified, and indicated by their ruling ideas: —

1. Transmigration of souls: We sinned in a former state, and so deserve the ill that is allotted to us.

2. Adam's sin corrupted our race-stock, so that by nature we deserve all ill.

3. The absolute God does as he wills and makes a thing right by willing it.

4. There is, in fact, no evil. Whatever is, is right.

5. Moral evil is man's choice; and physical evil is a necessary means to our development.

6. Dualism: God is good, but limited by Ahriman, Satan, fate, or other evil.

7. Pessimism: There is no good God, no theodicy.

It should be added that some of these doctrines might be extensively subdivided; also that some individual theodicies mingle several of these notions in various forms and potencies.

Our further studies of this subject will be limited to numbers 7 and 5, popular interest being confined to these two.

2. THE CASE FOR SCIENTIFIC PESSIMISM.

The Witnesses: *Solomon* was King of Jerusalem in the days of its glory, and he had attained great honor, and wealth, and wisdom, and had seen all the works that are

done under the sun, but he found that in much wisdom there is much grief. He gathered great riches, such as no king on earth could equal, and behold they were vanity. He gave himself to pleasure, and withheld not from his eyes anything they wished to see, nor from his heart any joy. Then he looked on all the works his hands had wrought, and behold all was vanity.

He applied his heart to explore all the works of God, and he turned his heart to know wisdom itself, and saw how it excels folly as light excels darkness; yet also he returned, and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to the understanding, nor yet favor to the man of skill, but time and chance happeneth to them all. The wise and the foolish come to the same end, and pass away; all are vain; and wisdom itself is vain.

Job. — More of the elements of the problem were grasped by the author of Job, and were set forth in that classic drama which has been both as a literary work and as a philo-

sophical essay, the admiration of all historic times. It is related that a wise and good man, zealous in piety for self and others, known of all, both man and God, to be blameless and righteous and devout, was yet grievously afflicted. In a moment, as it were, his estate was destroyed, his children slain, his friends turned against him, his good name assailed, and his body afflicted with a loathsome disease. While on the other hand, as he says, the wicked live to a ripe old age, in health and prosperity and honor, their children are prospered with them and their houses are safe from fear.

Job is very clear that God, knowing him to be innocent, has yet treated him as if he were guilty: has vexed him night and day and terrified him with dreams, has hunted him as one would hunt a lion and snared him in a net, and set him up for his target and smitten him with poisoned arrows, torn him, broken him asunder, dashed him to pieces, has wronged him and persecuted him as an enemy, and multiplied his wrongs without cause. In such words Job accuses God.

The Church. — The next witness that the pessimist calls is the Christian Church. Hear its evidence. It has taught that this world is evil, a vale of tears, the kingdom of Satan, the natural abode of the martyr, it is something to be endured for awhile, a place of trial for flesh and spirit, an unworthy and even malicious thing: a fleeting show for man's delusion given, so thoroughly bad that only a fragment can be saved, and that by miracle, and at a great price, even the death of God, the Son of God.

The church thought it necessary to explain the miserable estate of man, and therefore invented the doctrine of total depravity, which teaches that man deserves all possible ills, and so God is not unjust in inflicting them. Yet feeling in their hearts a suspicion that this theodicy is lacking after all, they point to a future life where the wrongs of this life will be set right. Thus they confess that this world of itself cannot be justified.

Still further, they teach that bad as this world is, it is growing worse; the climax of evil must soon be reached, Anti-Christ must

come, and a universal conflagration will be the only possible and fitting result.

Not all the members of the church have agreed in this extreme statement. Some of them have had peculiar dispositions, or a limited experience and observation. They are like Emerson; but Carlyle took him down into the slums of London and showed him some of the worst of them, and said: "*Now* do you believe in Hell?" So generally, however, has the severer doctrine been approved, that even the chief of the optimists, Origen himself, regarded this world as a penal colony.

Christians would probably have reached a more general agreement on this view, had it not been for certain natural tendencies to misrepresent the facts to one's own imagination; for we instinctively contend against pain and all felt evil, and the worse it is, the more we try to slight it and to minimize it. For instance, our memory dwells fondly on past pleasures because we like to recall them, and avoids the pains because we dislike them; and so its picture of the past is untrue. Still

more so of the future, for not being limited by any experience, because the facts of the future are yet to come, we paint it in all the colors we love. And thus, however dark the present, our picture of life as a whole is suffused with rosy tints, its actual colors are quite misrepresented. Indeed, if it were not so we could not live, for if time did not mitigate our sorrows, if we could recall all the bitterness of our pains and griefs, and still more, if we should join to them an equally real sense of those to come, we should be entirely crushed beneath them.

The pessimist presses his argument further and continues: See how maliciously our nature is constructed, for this false instinct by which we spontaneously minimize evils, saves our life, when if we only saw things as they are we should perish and be at peace. But this is not allowed; we are so made that we instinctively cling to life all the more madly if we have suffered much, fearing that a worse fate may come to us if we venture to give up the ills we have. So we foolishly love life which is evil, and fear death which

is no evil, but the cessation of all evil. If we were guided by reason alone, we should love death and hate life; but by various illusions we are as we are. With the growth of intelligence, however, these illusions will pass away and the barren awful fact will be manifest. Thus both our present ignorance and our coming knowledge are evil; and that which comes is worse, yet there is no escape; we are impelled to this disillusionizing advance of intelligence and its terrible consequences.

Meanwhile how we desperately clutch at any fiction to bolster up our optimism! Many falsehoods must be invented to support one. An old prophet said, "I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." Of course he *had* seen the righteous forsaken and his seed begging bread, if he had seen anything. Yet the men of the church have gone on repeating the word, though their eyes gave them the lie every day, and though Solomon and Job had plainly set forth the prosperity of the wicked,

and Jesus had said: Neither did this man sin, nor his parents, that he was born blind; and had definitely told them that in this world they should have tribulation.

By the same tendency we have been accustomed to resort to various comforting expressions, and certain harmless, indeed, necessary sophisms. We soften a pain by saying we are not so badly off as others we have heard of. One man who had sciatica gave thanks it was not gout, and when he had gout he gave thanks it was not both, and when he had both he gave thanks that he had not had both all the time. We are taught that it is a virtue to persistently look on the good side of things, and are wont to console a sufferer by the remark that good often comes of evil — not thinking that it is true also that evil comes of good, as, for example, some poor body's good intentions that work almost more mischief than evil intentions.

Likewise those great theologians, who most zealously declare the total depravity of this world, have sometimes from the same

world, worked out a Natural Theology, and have so — by great magic it was! — derived the Absolutely Good from the absolutely evil. They did not perceive the irony of it; but in their "reasoning," we perceive the logical value of optimism.

This habit of thought rises also on occasion to great heights of heroism. For the most obstinate asserters of optimism are sometimes the very men who have suffered most in the world: Paul, Origen, and the whole line of Christian martyrs. Such habits should be allowed them. There is need enough of every device by which the powers of evil can be mitigated. By all means let them persuade themselves, or think they persuade themselves, to give thanks for their griefs.

Many have attained an easier grace of giving thanks for other people's grief, for Dante's and for Tennyson's loss of their best-beloved, because by such means, forsooth, we have certain beautiful poems for our delectation. So we are told of some great one made great by the hard circum-

stances of his youth, and are led to forget that ninety and nine others were kept back discouraged, crushed by the same sort of circumstances, and that for the lack of timely effective sympathy and kindly aid, most of the world's genius goes to waste.

Perhaps no one has more clearly expressed the mode of mind that finds satisfaction in evil than Max Müller, who wrote that "A universe in which endless punishment were not, would be an undesirable universe."

One cannot, however, praise evil with a whole heart, and so be at peace after all — coming into optimism by the back door; and therefore the persistent optimist has yet other devices. He cries down the occasion: "Shall gravitation cease when the saints go by!" or "If you will diligently consider man, you will find him only smoke and bubble — as if rhetoric, or reviling the object abused could justify the abuse. Or, he says, "Evil is only negative anyhow" — as if metaphysics could cure a toothache. Or, again, he says, "Pains do not really exist, we are all infinitely happy" — as if false

assertion to the verge of insanity were any better than metaphysics.

Thus, somehow, in spite of the facts, and with or without trying to justify his idea, man has taken a bright view of the world, and has painted it in attractive colors. Had he the courage to see it as it is (according to the pessimist), he would find it altogether evil. Because he must, he has

> "trusted God was love indeed,
> And love Creation's final law —
> Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
> With ravin shrieked against his creed."

Some peoples are found who have no such infatuations: Nature's shriek has been heard and heeded by them, perhaps because they had not mental invention enough to work up a fictitious philosophy apart from nature. Their philosophy has been guided by the veracious and unimaginative process of evolution, and is a spontaneous response to the facts. So, Herodotus tells us, the Thracians[1] greeted a new-born child with

[1] Sully, *History of Pessimism*, p. 19.

lamentations, enumerating the woes he would have to meet; but they buried the dead with games and rejoicing. The same unsophisticated philosophy prevails largely in the East, in Asia and Africa, among those tribes that have begun to think but have not yet learned our western hypocrisies.

The facts of life. — Our next witness, says the pessimist, is Life itself; not that sentimental philosophy which persistently blinds its eyes to the facts, but *things as they are.* Now by our very nature, life is practically made up of a series of efforts after something, because we want it. And a want is a budding pain, always felt enough to lead us to act in order to satisfy it, and varying in intensity from the least to the greatest of our pains. If, perchance, we come to the condition of having all our wants satisfied, then presently ennui sets in, which is, if possible, still more unbearable. Thus life is a pendulum swinging between the pains of want and those of ennui: we want, or want to want, all the time.

It is to be observed that some pleasures

are attached to these pains, that is, we enjoy the removal of the want or the gratification of it, but just as soon as one desire is satisfied, another arises. Also observe that the want always exceeds the pleasure, for we desire more than we have, or we should not be able to say we want, nor to act toward supplying the want. Thus, in the nature of the case, man never *is* but always *to be* blest: there is always an excess of want over satisfaction: pain exceeds pleasure.

There are many evidences that the world is constructed for pain. Observe how it is that we do not so much feel health as sickness: we feel pain, but do not feel painlessness; feel care, but not freedom from care. Again, pain grows more painful the longer it lasts (up to limit of the power of the system to endure, when by physical necessity, destruction begins), but pleasure continued soon cloys. And even then while customary pleasure ceases to please, yet if it is interrupted, pain results. Nature has a dog-in-the-manger disposition. It will not allow

us to reduce the terror of past evils by forgetting them, for it has ordained that pleasures cannot long be appreciated without a contrasted pain, and therefore pain must intervene and be repeated often enough to be kept fresh in mind.

If any one doubts the preponderance of pain, let him compare the pleasure of the animal that eats another, with the pain of the animal eaten. Or let him compare the pains of hunger and thirst in general, with the pleasures of eating and drinking, or the pains of a toothache with the pleasure of recovering from a toothache. Remember also that most of our pleasures are the getting rid of pain, and thus any one can see how very much less are these pleasures than the corresponding pains. Or still more generally: the sum of possible pains exceeds the sum of possible pleasures. So the question whether nature is fitted for joy or sorrow is answered.

Note also that man was not asked whether he would accept existence on any such terms. Life is thrust upon us:

"What without asking, hither hurried, *whence?*
And without asking *whither*, hurried hence —
O many a Cup of this forbidden Wine
Must drown the Memory of that Insolence." [1]

Evil is being increased. — It would be less discouraging if there were any hope that our earthly condition would be better at a later day. But what are the indications? (1) Our nature, as we advance, is becoming more sensitive to pain. (2) We naturally look also to the future and suffer by anticipation, whereas the lower animals are confined to the present; they suffer for the moment only; they have no unfortunate disposition to artificially duplicate evil. (3) Man has other special sources of torture in his ideal life: his defeated ambitions, wounded pride, unrequited love. (4) Again, he multiplies sorrow artificially by the fact of his growing sympathy with others.[2]

In very fact, as our civilization advances, our wants increase in number and intensity. Behold the specter of poverty of the masses that has of late years created such conster-

[1] *Rubaiyat*, xxx. [2] Paulsen, *Ethics*, p. 310–11.

nation; whereas a hundred years ago the poverty of the masses was ten times greater than it is now. Now they have become more intelligent and conscious of their condition, and they can no longer endure its evil. Everywhere, He that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow. The lower classes and natives are happier in proportion as they are lower. So the animals are happier than man, their pleasures are fewer but intenser, unimpeded, all-absorbing; while man, the highest animal, is the most necessitous, and is becoming still more so. The most unhappy of all are the geniuses, those supersensitive creatures doomed to the torment of living with those who neither know nor care for their finer sensibilities, who even despise and tread upon them. It may be true that they prefer their life of torment, because of some infatuation; for they seem to think it a "pearl of great price," and they "sell all and buy it" — as a silly girl spends her all for jewelry (mere paste it is in this case). The poet Burns saw the real contrast of man and beast in the range of their life. When

he was ploughing his field he turned up the nest of a mouse, and so ruined the happiness of a fellow-creature; which evoked the poet's tender sympathy; but he adds:—

> "Still thou art blessed compared with me,
> The present only toucheth thee,
> But och! I backward cast my e'e
> On prospects drear!
> And forward though I canna see,
> I guess and fear."

It must be a species of insanity, says an eminent critic, that leads men to prefer their "superior position and high privileges." But such being their bent, it might be supposed that nature would allow them to have what they want. Not so, however; it has arranged to prevent so far as possible every advance, and contends mightily against it. "I know of no study so unutterably saddening as that of the evolution of humanity, as it is set forth in the annals of history. Out of the darkness of prehistoric ages, man emerges with the marks of his lowly origin strong upon him. He is a brute, only more intelligent than the other brutes, a blind prey to

impulses, which as often as not lead him to destruction: a victim to endless illusions which make his mental existence a terror and a burden, and fill his physical life with barren toil and battle. He attains a certain degree of comfort, and develops a more or less workable theory of life in such favorable situations as the plains of Mesopotamia or of Egypt; and then with such power as he has gathered he becomes conservative, and so, for thousands and thousands of years struggles with varying fortunes, attended by infinite wickedness, bloodshed and misery, to maintain himself at that point, on the one hand, against the greed and ambition of his fellowman, and on the other against the efforts of those who try to get him to move on. And when he has moved a step further, he exactly repeats the process with all who wish him to move yet further." "This conquered land of the intellect would, in fact, present all the appearance of a battle-field stained with the blood of many victims, singed with the flames of martyrdom, and eloquent with every form of terror and

punishment which human ingenuity can devise!" "Every step of progress has been from scaffold to scaffold and from stake to stake."

When a man charges a great price for anything, it is because he is interested in the price; he wants the money. What can we infer that nature is interested in and wants, when she charges so great a price of misery for every gain in man's progress?

The same temper in nature is exhibited in her provision for ethical and individual advances. What is the meaning of ethical conduct? It is not the following out of your instincts, which would be pleasure; it is the denial of them; and he who gives himself entirely to the world unto his own destruction is praised as most virtuous. If, on the other hand, the ethical world were so constructed that self-assertion were virtue, and the following out of our strongest passions and sources of pleasure were wholesome and to be praised, then nature would be our friend and could be spoken of as favoring happiness rather than misery. But when

she makes sacrifice the condition of advancement, we must infer that she desires to torment us.

Nor is it that she demands hardship and pain alone, for we are told by great authorities, and they are supported by the facts, that sin itself is a necessary part of the order of things. Dr. Hodge, for example, said that the highest glory of God and the welfare of men have been promoted by human sin and misery, and that the same may be expected forever. The church has told us, It must needs be that offences come, but woe to him through whom they come. — Both the offence and the woe are necessary. Great illustrations of the law are offered, as in the doctrine that there is no salvation but by the murder of Jesus. One might fill a volume of quotations from the theologians in praise of sin and its necessary utilities. The poet says:

> "Pride ruined the angels,
> Their shame them restores;
> And the joy that is sweetest
> Lurks in the stings of remorse."

In order, then, to the joy that is sweetest we must have had the sting of remorse, which can only come after sin. This I repeat is *by the constitution of nature and of the mind.*

What, then, have the optimists themselves testified, as they report the very facts, but that *nature is avaricious for both misery and sin?* — for so she conditions her gifts, both small and great.

The character of nature, more specifically. — Nearly all the things which men are forbidden to do because they are wrong, and for doing which they are hung or imprisoned, are nature's every-day performances. Killing, the most criminal act recognized by human laws, nature does once to every being that lives, and in a large proportion of cases, after protracted tortures such as only the greatest monsters we read of in human history ever inflicted on their fellow-creatures. Nature impales men, breaks them as if on a wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones, like the first Christian martyrs, starves them with hunger, freezes them with

cold, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of the professional Inquisitor never surpassed.

Human beings are exhorted to mercy and tenderness and justice, and we will not number among our friends him who needlessly sets foot on a worm. But nature tramples on them all, and elaborately provides for their doing likewise. A large portion of the animal creation pass their existence in tormenting and devouring other animals; they have been lavishly fitted out with instruments for that very purpose, and their strongest instincts impel them to it, and many could not live without it. Neither with animals nor with men has nature any regard for mercy or justice or equity. She empties her shafts on the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst; upon those who are engaged in the highest and worthiest enterprises, and often as the direct consequences of the noblest acts. She mows down those on whose existence hangs

the wellbeing of a whole people, and perhaps the prospects of the human race for generations to come, with as little compunction as those whose death is a relief to themselves and a blessing to their neighbors.

We execrate the memory of a human tyrant and exhaust the vocabulary of blame for St. Bartholomew's day, and the days of the Irish rebellion, for Tai-Ping and the Armenian massacre — some thousands of people; what then shall we say of nature's earthquake that sinks a province, and nature's drouth that starves a nation, and nature's plague and cholera, whose poison, surpassing any that Borgia ever mixed, is secretly mingled with the air and water and other necessaries of life, and so desolates a continent — and this not once for all, and be done with it, but age after age, unsurfeited, producing and destroying.[1]

The customary replies of optimism are so weak and vain as to exhibit their fatuity and to confirm the argument of pessimism. "Evil is but for a moment." What folly

[1] Mostly from Mill's *Three Essays*, p. 28, etc.

in calling that a moment which has already lasted a million of years, and shows signs of yet increasing in extent and ferocity! Leibnitz suggested that "after the Apokatastasis, all will be blessed." Good! — after the Apokatastasis; but how about a hundred million years or more before that event?

They also talk of "compensations in the fact of the infinite nature of man." Infinite nature! That is just the difficulty: he *is* like a bird made for the free life of the open sky, and inclined to it and loving it — but he is caught in a cage with all manner of unclean things, and doomed to pine away and die, longing and crying out for freedom and for the higher life, or for no life. Man's privilege and dignity (being denied him) are his deeper damnation.

The formal argument of the optimist is that the terrible things are unavoidable; they are "necessary means to a greater end." — By the way, when was it shown that things necessary are any less disagreeable? Here are some of the specifications. It is alleged that certain of the highest excellencies of

character, the very perfections of sainthood, are to be reached only by suffering, and that, too, not merited suffering of that which is due our sins, but innocent suffering. Thus the torments which tyrants heap on the unoffending "call forth our tenderest sympathy and devotion to the sufferer," and "our most vigorous indignation" and the heroic virtues therewith connected; and when cruelty turns against us personally, then "our own unmerited suffering cultivates that perfect patience — ripest, mellowest, strongest, finest, supremest quality of the saints." The optimists say these qualities could not be obtained in any other way. But the pessimist replies, suppose for a moment this statement to be true, who made it so? God made it so. And our opponents insult intelligence by adding that the same God who invented and carries on a progressive series of accumulating misery and sin is altogether good. Strange meaning they have for *good!* How would they define *evil?*

But their "reasoning" is all fiction. It is not true that pain is necessary, and that "God

cannot train up a race of creatures without suffering." The truth is that he can do it and does do it.[1] If you want evidence and illustration of this, just watch a troop of healthy boys at play. Every breath they draw is an exultation; every muscular movement is a delight; every struggle is an intoxication. Mentally and morally and physically the lads are developing not only without pain, but with positive rapture of enjoyment. The necessity of strife as a part of the process of evolution is urged. Of course if we are to have tigers and hyenas, sharks, wasps and puffadders as a result of evolution, we must have the strife to develop such dispositions. But the world could get along very well without them; and is it worth while to adopt special means to produce Caligulas and Neros and their kind? High forms of life can be developed without cruelty, and without various forms of evil. The bee lives on honey with no sour nor bitter, and he is

[1] *Evil and Evolution*, p. 32. "It is quite true that pain and poverty are no longer regarded as prime and necessary conditions to mental and moral effort." P. 33.

one of the cleverest and happiest of mortals. Plant life was carried up to its highest point without pain, and all the animals, instead of torturing each other, might live on plants, as some of them do, if they had been so developed. The herbivorous animals do not fall below the flesh-eaters in the grade of their evolution. No doubt violence and cruelty have developed remarkable characteristics; but how many even superior faculties has it stunted or destroyed? Anyhow, while very much less of suffering would apparently have done so much better, and would have been so much kinder, one cannot urge necessity as a defence of the goodness of God.[1]

Neither does it appear that the cruelties of nature must be done "in order to the fulfillment of some law," or "lest God break his own laws." For God might so relate the laws that all the worser forms of cruelty could be prevented. Just as when he arranged in physics that the cooling of an object should reduce its bulk, as a general law, he also arranged an exception so that when ice is

[1] *Evil and Evolution*, pp. 140–158, 184.

formed the law is suddenly reversed, the bulk increases for awhile and so the ice is made lighter and lies on the top of the water. By this device the ponds are prevented from freezing up solid in the winter, which would be a great calamity. So a variation of law or a new law might interfere to prevent the terrible calamities in human lives, and at the same time law in general, as in the case of water, would be preserved. The optimistic philosopher must confess it an insoluble mystery that there is not in the world a constant agency to ward off suffering from the innocent. But pessimism has no such difficulties, it is according to the facts.

One more witness forbids the optimist to say that necessity and not God is the author of the evils of the world. It is true that, as things now are, pains and other evils come by the laws and processes of nature. But the optimist teaches that God made the laws and processes, and if he is omnipotent and of infinite resources, he can unmake them and make others. Job was right; the Lord is responsible for all this. And Isaiah reports

his very words: "*I am the Lord, and there is none else; I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil. I am the Lord who do all these things.*"

Is the church satisfied with this witness? — Such is the case for the prosecution.

3. EXAMINATION OF THE CASE FOR SCIENTIFIC PESSIMISM.

It must be admitted that the indictment against nature and its cause is a powerful one. When we behold what desolation he hath wrought and how terrible are his ways, we know that either God is evil, or he has dared to do what none but God would dare to do.

Was it all fiction when some one said: "Now I see why God did not create this world sooner, why he delayed through all the ages of that early eternity; it was because he saw what terrible things he must do and allow to be done?"

It is significant also that so much of the material of this argument against optimism was furnished by the defense. It would

seem that the optimist has been stunned or dazed by the power of opposing evils, and has, therefore, often failed to look them in the face and give them his best thought. He has been silent when he ought to have spoken; and when he has spoken he has blundered with half thoughts or false thoughts, and so betrayed his cause and left himself open to such attacks. His case was hard enough to begin with, but by timidity and folly he has made it harder.

One lesson he should thoroly learn: He cannot afford to blind his eyes to the facts, nor to slight the occasion, nor in any manner to misrepresent it, — nor to allow others to misrepresent it.

The pessimist has proved (what the optimist should never have denied) that *pain is a great fact* in the world, and that there is a growing sensitiveness to it. To deny or conceal, or to minimize the statement, is folly, and can lead only to disaster. The friends of goodness must now say, with the scientist and statistician, "pain has existed for millions of years," and "on the average

in this world one heart is broken every hour." Evil is not negative merely, it is positive and real. The church has made a great mistake in this regard, and has in effect been teaching [1] "a most mischievous form of pessimism." Mr. Sully [2] feels that the common understanding of man is insulted by the metaphysician's attempt to conjure away evil by calling it negative, and to charm it out of existence by words.

It was an equally great mistake in the church to teach that the world as a whole is evil and of the devil, that matter is essentially evil, that the body is a curse, that we are totally depraved by nature and deserve all misery. Such statements are wretchedly false and blasphemous, and they give aid and comfort to the enemy.

Pain is from God. — It cannot be doubted that evil (pain) as a means (not as an end), is a part of the plan of nature. God has arranged for it in making animal life sensitive to pain, through countless ages of geol-

[1] Royce, *Spirit of Mod. Philos.*, pp. 450–53.
[2] *History of Pessimism*, p. 157.

ogy. Not in a few cases merely, but in many and in general, organizations are adapted to pain and all its horrors. The powers of nature do often torment us, evil microbes attack us in secret and destroy us and our beloved.

Worse yet: *The sufferings of the innocent are* (to some extent) ordained and *caused by God.* This thought has been peculiarly offensive to the Christian. But now he must acknowledge that pain is by divine appointment, a part of the life of most of the lower animals (who cannot sin that they might deserve pain); and even more intense forms of it are by the same hand (directly or indirectly, it makes no difference here) inflicted on innocent children who have not yet reached the age of moral responsibility, and on adults who have not sinned accordingly. One should not try to dodge the facts by fanciful theories of "sin in a former state of existence," for which there is no evidence, nor by any other cheap device of metaphysics. Let the scientist have his generalization. "The fact is, that the actual dis-

tribution of good fortune and misery is largely independent of the moral qualities which men call good or bad." [1]

"Those who deserve punishment often escape, while the lash of opprobrium, if not of judicial sentence, is continually laid on the back of the innocent, and the finger of scorn is continually being pointed at the righteous. Herodias triumphs and John the Baptist is beheaded, Barabbas is released and Jesus is crucified." [2] Nor has any regular relation been discovered between pleasure and pain on the one hand, and right and wrong on the other.

Let it no longer be claimed that "suffering comes only by breaking the law, and if we could perfectly keep the law we should have no pain." But rather, "pain comes sometimes by obeying law, and in accordance with law and by law." Christ himself suffered *in order to fulfill the law.*

Still again, it cannot be denied that *avoid-*

[1] Huxley, *Romanes Lecture*, p. 41. Even so advanced a theologian as Fairbairn, is not quite free from the thought that physical evil is the effect of moral evil. *Philos. of the Chn. Relig.*, pp. 163–167.

[2] Griffith, *Fatherhood of God*, p. 178.

able undeserved pain is inflicted by God. The Christian theory includes this, when it holds that God's will is free in the making of this world. One cannot rationally escape from the proposition unless he hold that God is ruled by necessity.

Provision for sin. — Neither can it be denied that God is the author of the possibilities of sin. He has so arranged that sin was practically certain to be committed by men. Moreover, just as with development the possibilities of pain increase, so with every advance in man, the range of evil is increased, and the more horribly wicked he may become. Yea, properly speaking, temptation toward sin is appointed by God. The poet wrote:

> I saw the pulse's maddening play
> Wild send thee pleasure's devious way,
> Misled by fancy's meteor ray,
> By passion driven:
> But yet the light that led astray
> Was light from Heaven.

Inference. — All these things being evil, and being done by God, therefore the an-

cient dilemma, attributed to Epicurus, is strictly just: "Either God could, but would not prevent evil, and then he is wicked; or he would, but could not, and then he is not omnipotent." There being evil in God's world, it is necessary to suppose a defect of goodness or a defect of power. So far the pessimist has established his case; he is perfectly right in his premises and inference of so much of his argument.

It must also be confessed that the optimist's defences have sometimes been unfortunate. It was neither gracious nor good logic to thank God for Dante's and Tennyson's griefs, even though we have profited by them. The pessimist is right (in the usual meanings of the terms): A perfectly wise and good God would have found means to produce good poetry without vivisection — else, what do you mean by "*infinite resources*"? — "O, no," says another, "the noblest things are born in agony!" — It may be so, says the pessimist, but a good God would arrange that the noblest things should be born in joy, and that there should

not be any agony at all. Instead of which he has arranged a system which includes Neros and Caligulas and Borgias and their kind turned loose on the guilty and the innocent alike, to have their own way and to fill themselves with carnage; when, according to the Christian theory, God could have stepped in and prevented their course of infamy and cruelty at any time.

From this conclusion there is no escape for the Christian theist, except to deny that God *could* do otherwise than he has done. Which is to say:[1] "The Absolute God has vanished. The old theodicy is no theodicy."

Having now clearly seen that so much of the pessimist's case is proved, let us inquire concerning the remainder.

LOGICAL ERRORS IN THE ARGUMENT OF THE PESSIMIST.

There seem to be two classes of errors in the case as presented. First, there is a mis-

[1] *Cf.* Fiske's *Cosmic Philosophy*, vol. ii, pp. 404–7; and *Idea of God*, p. 121.

apprehension or misuse of facts; and secondly, there are inferences from a false general principle assumed.

First, the pessimist misrepresents the facts either by quoting only a portion of them, or by forcing an evil interpretation on them. For example, it is true that the church and other witnesses have testified as he alleges, but still more they have testified to the contrary. It is true there is a growing sensitiveness of nerves, and other greatly increasing possibilities and opportunities of pain; but there are also possibilities and opportunities of increasing pleasure. Likewise it may be true that the omnipotent God *could* have chosen for us a lot with more pleasure in it, and *has not;* but also it is true that he might have chosen a lot with more pain in it, and has not. Now to make use of one set of these facts and not the other is specious and unfair.

There is a fallacy also in the habit of looking at all pains in the mass, as if the mass describes our condition of life. But in fact we do not suffer them all at once. Usually

we suffer one at a time, and more often none at all.

There is a fallacy in the statement (as it is used) "that words are inadequate to represent the power of evil." It is true that the words used to describe the toothache are inadequate, in the sense that they do not cause so much pain as the tooth does. But at the same time they are adequate to the real purpose of words. Just as words which have no weight on the scales may truly, and adequately, say that a certain man weighs one hundred and fifty pounds. Words may indeed exceed the facts indefinitely, as they do in our customary exaggerations, and in Schopenhauer's brilliant hyperboles.

His *misinterpretations*, to use no stronger word, are quite as manifest. He has no proper understanding of the nature of *want*. Want is not primarily a pain; it is a kind of desire which leads to or stimulates to action. And pain is not the essence of life, but impulse is the essence. Pain is not the characteristic of life, nor the tendency of life, nor the bulk of life. The natural outgoings of

life, as of a child's spontaneous activities, are the overflows of energy, and are joyous. Many young animals, and most of all the healthy human child, spend years together in almost unmixed delight. And how often do we of all ages have pleasures arising from no preceding state of pain, but moving on from one joy to another, before we have time to be tired of any one, and continuing in a long series, with no evil in the whole list. With some classes of our joys (of eye and ear) there are almost no pains to speak of.

The fact is merely that pain is associated with *some* of our life and is the condition of some life; it is grossly misrepresented when it is said to be the substance of life or the condition of all life.

While there are no exact statistics as to whether pain is the bulk of life, there are important signs. Thus health and normal structure are more common than disease and deformity; and the universe (on the whole) is adapted to our growth and development, for it has brought us to the stage in which

we are. Then as intelligence increases we are increasing our means of avoiding pain, by medicine and surgery and anæsthetics, also the means of enhancing pleasure. Compare the varied and intense joys of civilized life with the dull monotony of the savage; compare the symphony orchestra and the grand opera of the one, with the tom-tom and the mad shrieks of the devil-dancer of the other. Such a comparison is vital to the whole question; for, to be happy is to have that which we most like. And we do *prefer* the advanced, the higher, the modern. We like the New York city of to-day better than the village of wigwams that once stood on Manhattan Island. The pessimist calls this a crazy preference, but he cannot deny that we have our preference — and one could not declare it crazy except on the presupposition that progress is evil, and that is to assume the point in dispute.

One more sign. — Our mental constitution is adapted to good and not to evil. Good has a value for us; it is a thing to be desired and worked for as an end. Evil can have

no value in itself, it can be nothing more than a means. It is because we are built for good that we do not easily understand the presence of evil. If we were built for evil we should then have a problem of good, and should be inquiring how we can harmonize it with our constitution.

But why multiply examples? It is in general by such distortions of fact and twisting of reason that the pessimist reaches his conclusion by some peculiar intellectual perversity, not by evidence rationally treated. Wholesome minds do not see things as he sees them, nor reason as he reasons. The wise of all times have, with hardly an exception, been optimists.

To the normal mind, "the trend of things is so clearly toward virtue that many have claimed that virtue and utility are really the same, and indeed if we extend utility to include the satisfaction of the moral nature, there is no disputing them."[1] The fair-minded historian and critic remarks the "utterly flimsy and meretricious character of Hart-

[1] Bowne, *Philos. of Theism*, pp. 219–20.

mann's examination of human life."[1] The same might be said of Schopenhauer's argument for pessimism. We must conclude with Sully and Bowne and Flint and the rest, that "pessimism is not a philosophy but a temperament."[2]

Secondly, the conclusions of the pessimist are often vitiated by a false à priori assumption as to the nature of God. He thinks of God as acting with totally unlimited possibilities before him. All his considerable objections to theodicy derive their power from this false assumption. When, for instance, from the existence of pain, and especially undeserved pain in the world, it is inferred that God is cruel, the inference is fully justified only by assuming that God could have done his work without pain.

But if, on the other hand, some things are in the nature of the case impossible, then we do not know à priori that the avoidance of pain is one of the things possible. So long as the pessimist is allowed to reason from the

[1] Sully, pp. 247–8.

[2] Nordau, *Degeneration*, p. 498 (Appleton's Ed., 1895).

doctrine of the "Absolute God," he prevails against theodicy of every kind.

But rational theologians see reason to believe that there is no such God. On the contrary, God is limited to the possible. It would seem that the attacks on theodicy nearly all fail by this common defect in their premise. Let that erroneous doctrine of Absolutism be removed, and then, in order to prove that God is unkind, one must prove that some pain which he has chosen was avoidable to the profit of men. Such a task the pessimist has not undertaken.

Summary. — The pessimist has accomplished two results: he has destroyed his own case by tricking with the facts, and by using them irrationally, and by relying too largely on a philosophical error; he has also destroyed the ordinary theodicy, which was founded on the same à priori assumption, which is by his work brought into still graver disrepute.

Some applications. — Before turning to the positive portion of the case for optimism, we may do well to observe more definitely some

of the changes in reasoning which are made necessary, both to optimist and to pessimist, by setting aside the thought of absolute omnipotence, and by regarding God as acting under limitations in the nature of things, which arise from his *own* nature.

From our present point of view, when we observe that bad men prosper and good men suffer, that one man has a desirable lot in life, and another no less deserving has an undesirable lot, we cannot at once say God is unjust; in order to say that, we must first prove that these bad things could have been otherwise, without still greater injury to men.

Or, again, it being undecided *how much* evil is unavoidable, one cannot "blame God for not interfering to stop the cruelties of Caligula and Nero." For, the critic sees that God *did* intervene (those bad men are dead long ago), and he can only complain that the Lord did not interfere sooner, whereas God evidently thought otherwise. There is merely an unfortunate difference of opinion between them.

And again, it was thought that evil ends

are manifest in nature, since capacity for pain and provision for pain are plainly by God's intention. But by our new light we see that, in the continuous flow of cause and effect, all ends in nature are also means to other ends. The question then at once arises whether the evil in certain events comes from their nature as causes, or from their nature as ends. The pessimist's case now depends on his proving that there is, in nature, some end which is evil, and that he has not proved.

A limitation of the better conception must also be noticed. The antecedent possibility of evil, the possibility that God may be the cause of some pain, does not include the doctrine that God may be the cause of *sin*, although many of the doctors have so held or implied.

Thus Bushnell: "How much better and more consonant also with our feeling to suppose that there is some antecedent necessity inherent in the conception of finite and begun existence, that in their training as powers they should be passed through the

double experience of evil and good, fall and redemption."[1] Bushnell is quite right that pain (physical evil) is necessary; but there is no evidence that sin (moral evil, the "fall") is necessary. All that can be alleged in this regard is that man must be made free to sin, not that he must necessarily sin. Most theologians seem unable to make the distinction, yet it must be insisted upon.

The doctrine appears in many forms. It is often said that "the problem of evil is to justify sin." Not at all. Sin never *was* just, and never *can* be just, nor justified. There is no such problem in theodicy, nor anywhere else. It proposes a contradiction of terms.

If now we can be rid of such errors of common speech, our ground will be more nearly cleared.

4. THE POSITIVE BASIS OF OPTIMISM.

The primary basis of theodicy reaches back to the doctrine that the First Cause is

[1] Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 132.

Mind. Now minds are such things as become aware of moral distinctions and assign value to them, and are moved to action thereby. So the infinite mind must be moral, and, in the very meaning of the words, the infinite moral is good. This is our starting point, and the primary indication of the truth of optimism.

In the second place, it is held that we instinctively and intuitively praise the goodness of the First Cause. "In my conscience, I perceive that the condemnation of God rests on evil, and that God is altogether good." Probably the same essential fact is called by another, the "Christian Consciousness," which by nature spontaneously has faith in the good and in its triumph. Thus we see that optimism arises partly from our temper. Just as we were saying that pessimism has its real basis in a morose disposition, so we now say optimism has at least a portion of its basis in a cheerful disposition. And it may rationally be so, if, as Professor James says in his "Will to Believe": "Pessimism is a disease. It leads to weakness and death.

But hope and faith are normal and healthy, they give strength and character and manhood and effectiveness." In action they mean courage, and force, and endurance, patience, triumph, victory. Therefore, optimism is good and true, and therefore pessimism is wrong and untrue.

Accordingly, Browning "will credit what suits his hopes and not his fears. The heart having a natural interest or function in faith, has rights there." And Ritschl[1] accepts theism and the Christian religion because of their "value."

Authorities. — Not Genesis alone promises that man's heel shall crush the serpent's head; the same thought finds expression in every great literature; in the Pandora myth, Hope is left to men; in the Norse legend, Balder the Good is to rise again after the great battle is fought and wickedness has been destroyed, and will come forth and reign forever in peace and righteousness; in one reading of the gloomy theology of

[1] *Justification and Reconciliation* (Scribners, 1900), pp. 203–11, etc.

Chaldea, Ishtar,[1] the goddess of love, seeks her lost one through all the torments of hell; and she finds him and brings him back to an endless life of joy, and, what is notable, all her divine gifts which she had to lay aside one after another as she penetrated to deeper and deeper recesses of the lower world, are restored to her. Love, though at so great a cost (temporary cost), had triumphed over death and hell.

Likewise pantheism, which exists in some form or other, secretly or openly in nearly all religions, teaches a return of all things to God and a cessation of the world-processes, an absorption into the infinite and blissful One. Even Buddha, chief of pessimists, foresaw Nirvana, perfect rest and bliss.

In spite of his philosophy, the modern pessimist writes on the Comforts of Pessimism; and its latest champion summarizes life as a draught of wormwood which he stirs and "drinks healing,"[2] and finds that after all, the best we can learn of the form and

[1] Maspero, *Dawn of Civilization*, p. 696.

[2] Deussen, *Elements of Metaphysics*.

substance of a religion is the Bible and true Christianity.[1]

Similarly the agnostic Huxley represents life as a game of chess, "the chess board is the world, the pieces are the forces of the universe, the rules of the game are what we call the laws of nature. The player on the other side is hidden from us. We know that his play is always fair, just and patient. But also we know, to our cost, that he never overlooks a mistake, or makes the smallest allowance for ignorance. To the man who plays well, the highest stakes are paid, with that sort of overflowing generosity with which the strong show delight in strength. And one who plays ill is checkmated, without haste, but without remorse . . . Not the mocking fiend, but a calm, strong angel playing for love (as we say) who would rather lose than win," is he who plays with us.

Better still, the multitude of those whom the common sense and mature judgment of the world have come to regard as normal and wholesome and competent in wisdom are

[1] Deussen, *Elements of Physics*, pp. 244–45.

professed optimists — Socrates, Plato, Marcus Aurelius, the Psalmist, Isaiah, Job, Jesus, Paul, John, and many of later times. Such are the chief experts in all great questions of morals, and their united and concurring intuition and judgment must receive great respect from all serious minds. As for the rest of us, ordinary mortals, our nature is so far advanced that we cannot believe the forms of nature can ever do an unmathematical thing, say, make $2 \times 2 = 5$; but these great experts have the same absolute confidence that the forces of nature can never do a wicked thing. The religion of a healthy mind is optimism.

It seems just also to add that our confidence in the correctness of the expert's judgment is growing; this we more and more recognize in psychology and philosophy, in business and politics and social affairs. Optimism is found to be the right "working theory."

Because of the visible and undeniable practical tendencies of these two theories, Professor James, in the book just quoted,

says: "Those who think that science (as commonly understood) is agnostic in theodicy must allow the immense practical value of optimism to tip the scales for them and to decide their minds and their wills for that theory — because also, even to remain in the state of agnosticism on this great subject is profoundly mischievous."

Inductive (*a posteriori*) *considerations.* — That God is good is also to be concluded from a now very extensive examination of his works in particular. First, lest in our study of small things, we overlook great and most significant things, let it be noted that many of the chief facts and laws of life are good and desirable — nearly all of us would say the overwhelming majority are so; but let us assume only what none can deny.

Secondly, a great number of apparent exceptions to goodness are found on fuller knowledge to be really beneficent. Thus the utilities of pain (physical evil) are found to be that it is (1) a warning of danger; (2) a stimulant to action; (3) a dissuasion from sin; (4) an offset to pleasure by which pleas-

ure is intensified, and (5) it has chastening, mellow effect on character. Perhaps there are still other uses which we have not yet discovered. We cannot, however, see that every single pain is useful and is justified. We can only say we have found so many to be right and just, that we may reasonably infer that if we were wiser we should find all to be of the same character.

We are further confirmed in this by the plain fact that the good is gaining advantage. Historians have shown that on the average, human life of to-day is twice as long as that of the Middle Ages. And the man of to-day suffers less if he will avail himself of the conveniences of civilization, and enjoys a great deal more than the man of three hundred years ago. For one item, the dreadful epidemics, bodily and mental, that swept over the people of those days are mostly impossible to-day, and, speaking generally, in their place reign peace and the useful arts.

As to the real tendency of the world as a whole, the sober opinion to which wise men

have come is well expressed by one of them. "I think it can be shown that the principles of morality have their roots in the deepest foundations of the universe, that the cosmic process is ethical in the profoundest sense, that in that far-off morning of the world, when the stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy, the beauty of self-sacrifice and disinterested love formed the chief burden of the mighty theme." [1]

Conclusion in general terms. — Thus taking as large and just a view as we can of the substance of things, and reasoning both deductively and inductively, we seem compelled to believe that the order of the world is beneficent, and therefore God is good.

But a more special statement of the theory seems demanded, and to that we now turn.

5. THE THEORY OF OPTIMISM, IN A FULLER STATEMENT.

The conditions of the problem which the Manager of the universe ever has before him are somewhat as follows: Man in a state of

[1] Fiske, *Through Nature to God*, p. 79.

nature, weak, dependent, in bondage, ignorant, dull, a sinner, — how shall he be changed so as to be strong, free, wise, alert, sensitive, and a saint? Now, the world as we know it is a contrivance for accomplishing the change. It partakes of the character of a gymnasium, in which men attain power by exercise.

Power is the first necessity to be provided for. In order to make sure that men will take a proper amount of exercise, various desires are planted in human nature, such as hunger and thirst, and possible pleasures are placed before them to call forth effort and to arouse intelligence in finding means to attain the pleasures. But God, who gives some gifts, must wisely withhold others, lest man be surfeited. And this very withholding is a gift.

> . . . Yet let him keep the rest,
> But keep them with repining restlessness:
> Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
> If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
> May toss him to my breast." [1]

[1] George Herbert.

Were the Gospel to offer satisfaction with the present life or attainment, Jesus could not say, "I came that they might have a more abundant life," but "I came that they might be more content with the present, and therefore have a less abundant life." So it is found that pleasures are not adequate stimulus; for man would rather limit his gratifications than exert himself very much. He is inclined to do just enough to get along from day to day. Stupidity pervades him; and an old proverb says, Against stupidity, the gods themselves contend unvictorious. Therefore man must be driven harder than by desire for pleasure. Socrates represented the state as a noble horse, but indolent, and himself as a divinely appointed gadfly; so must we all be stung into action. We must have pain, sickness, strife, violence; and if we still are slow, we must be moved upon at length by transcendental terrors. How else shall we be induced to put forth the energy necessary to our growth?

We naturally tend to make light of life, and incline to regard it as a feast, or per-

haps a farce or a comedy — and these doubtless are good in their places. But life is a tragedy and must be so. How often has the church cultivated an easy-going optimism: "God is good, there is nought to fear; or, it will be all right to those who do God's will; you have only to believe in Christ, and his merits will be credited to you, and triumph and joy and bliss will be secured." — Be not deceived. These also have their value but they are not enough; toil and trouble must yet be added. Jordan is still a hard road to travel — whether one journeys on the path that lies in the Promised Land or on the other, in the coasts of the Gentiles.

Quality of life. — But experience, the discipline of labor and pleasure and pain, have a higher office than the increase of energy. There is a subtle efficiency, especially in pain, to bring forth a finer quality of grace and joy, and indeed also a supreme strength. Often it is found that the

> "tears of the mournful eve,
> Tomorrow are gems of the morning."

Perhaps we cannot explain how it was, but Coleridge wrote:

> "She loves me best whene'er I sing
> The songs that make her grieve."

Those who have suffered deeply have most right to speak on this topic. Read the story of Joanna Ambrosius, who was accustomed to toil and hardship and grief from the first. Being of sensitive nature she felt them keenly, and so pursued love and joy all her life, but never overtook them. In her simple way she tells how once for a long time her muse had left her and brought her no more songs. But at last one day came pain and sat beside her, and somehow her songs returned — until, looking closer, she recognized in pain her long lost muse, and kissed him tenderly, and sings his praises, as of her beloved. There was no other way by which genius could be evoked; and seeing it was so, she gave thanks for her griefs.

Relations of the one to the many. — But now we must observe that the further develop-

ment of man, both expansion and refinement, both intellectual and moral, is conditioned on the establishment of social relations. In the cold language of ethics, altruism is an essential part of the complete or right character. It is necessary that man should cease to follow his natural impulses regardless of others, and even that he should have impulses to regard others. He must learn to find joy in the welfare of his neighbors and in serving their needs. This is necessary both to his growth and to theirs; and therefore in order to lead man along the higher way of life supreme joys have been set before him in this direction to entice him on. Mr. Sully says: In fact the greatest source of happiness is the source of the higher volitional restraint which is cultivated by constant contact with society; and the greatest possible development of the power to enjoy and the greatest realization of joy comes by that same altruism.

To this end of such profound import, provisions and plans were made from afar, even in geologic ages; instincts, necessities and conveniences were prepared. Perhaps the

distant beginnings of altruism are not to be distinguished from self-regard. For instance, it was arranged that one being should be born of another; and so a mother who by nature must love herself and her own affairs came to love her child because it was hers. So it has been suggested that in mother-love was the first departure from absolute selfishness. Another advance was made when we discovered the value of other people's unselfishness toward us. It was more pleasant to receive than to give, so we praised unselfishness and cultivated it in our neighbors, and ordained it as a sacred law.

Thus the earlier movements in this order were by *necessity* and the inviolate laws of nature. Men found that even their physical wants could not be gratified except by a division of labor, and by other and increasing interdependence. In the structure of nature we are members one of another, and if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; and if one is exalted, all are profited. This necessity is provided for mechanically in a large part of our life, lest

man in his ignorance and malice may wantonly destroy all things and defeat the purpose of God.

Behold the imperious ways of Divine Love. It assumes to know what we need, and to have authority. It did not ask us whether we would like to be born; it sought not our consent, nor counsel, nor wishes. And when we have been born, and have tried life for a while and perchance do not like it, and are ready to say with Seneca, "Death is the best invention of nature," yet we cannot avail ourselves of it, for not even in death can we escape from life and from God. We are brought forth into this world, and sent to its school like heedless and naughty boys, where the rod is not spared, and where we are compelled to learn our lessons — doomed to be, and doomed to become; and some have added "doomed to be saved."

In the process of our schooling, pain and sorrow have a divine office in the cultivation of sympathy. To be sure, if there were no evil we might still rejoice with those that do rejoice; but to mourn with those that mourn

is a finer quality of sympathy, and it could not be but for the world of grief.

Still further, sympathy for merited pains, as where the sinner is being punished, is comparatively slight and cool; a supreme quality is called out only by undeserved pain.

The central difficulty. — That the innocent should suffer, as they do, and that, not merely a little, but much, often unto death — this is the greatest difficulty in theodicy. If there is anything to be compared with this, it is the existence of sin in the world. But we can explain sin: man did it. When, however, by the unavoidable laws of nature, the guiltless are wracked with pain, it is God who does it, or at least has so provided and intended. How can such an act be explained as coming from a good God?

The explanation we were just giving is that such a method is necessary in order to reach a certain moral result in character. That is to say, God has done evil that good may come! — One may well exclaim, Is this theodicy? And the sad reply is, there was no other way to reach the result; if there

had been a pleasanter way, God would certainly have chosen it. No wonder men have asked whether the prize was worth what it cost? To this question, however, wise men have answered, Yes; and in the facts of nature we have God's answer.

A more particular study may justify the answer. Thus when it is known that the innocent must suffer with the guilty, several consequences follow. For example, a sinner is often restrained because he foresees that his mother would be grieved, or his friend offended, or his country harmed, or his child dishonored, corrupted or misled.

Then again, in the cruelties that are heaped on the unoffending by the hand of nature, or by man with nature's permission, there is for us not a physical pain nor a mental pain, as of wounded pride, but a moral pain, our conscience is offended, our whole moral nature is shocked. It is only when in an advanced stage of our soul, with large intelligence and fine conscience, we see and feel how terribly wrong the world is, that we are roused to great effort

to make it better. Though at first we may rebel and exclaim, "cursed be the spite that ever I were born to set it right," yet at last when the facts have become unendurable, we are driven to take up the cause of perishing virtue and honor and righteousness, and to put forth greater moral energy than could otherwise be developed in us. There was danger that we be "tolerably" well satisfied with the ordinary life, and therefore we are made intolerably dissatisfied with it.

Yea, perhaps, as Browning says, it is appointed that some of us should be uncertain that God is good, in order that we may not cease effort. If we *knew*, if there were no doubt of the issues of life, we might settle down to inactivity and rely too much on God or our sure destiny, and so lose its blessing after all. It is claimed that only when men (of lesser faith) fear that God will abandon some of his children to destruction in hell, that they are moved to prevent his doing so, and therefore send missionaries, at great expense, or

even go forth as missionaries themselves to save the heathen. In this effort and self-sacrifice both the Christian and the heathen are saved; when, but for our distrust of God, both would be lost. So, temporary doubt may lead to a better faith, as some kinds of sickness clear the blood and leave us in better health. Accordingly, the poet sees in pessimism, skepticism, and despair a new proof of the existence and goodness of God, being, as they are, wise devices for training up faith and hope stronger and surer than else were possible. Paradoxical as it may seem, the very existence of evil, with its ominous threatenings and its power to distract and distress us, is itself the answer to its own question, for only against despair can hope rise to its greatest height; and only against all the power of evil can love come to its glorious victory and perfection.

But before we attain perfection another element of character must be called forth and disciplined. Necessity, in the order of

which the preceding has been mostly stated, is not adequate to morals. *Free choice* must be allowed and cultivated. Therefore, a departure from pure mechanicalism was made, in what we still call the "hard necessities of pain." The ways that are not good for us were filled with pain, that we might freely avoid them. And if we do not observe the sign of God's displeasure, pains are heaped up unto what often amounts to compulsion again. But not by violence can the loftiest heights of character be reached. For these results it is requisite that we should be *willing* to suffer that which we have not deserved, and to undertake labors which are not due from us, to work for those who will not pay us, nor give thanks, but abuse us.

> "Take up the white man's burden
> And reap his old reward —
> The blame of those ye better,
> The hate of those ye guard."

Such unwelcome tasks must be freely undertaken ere we reach perfection. If there were no such tasks, no injustice, no

cruelty, no innocent suffering, then the perfection of human tenderness and sympathy could not be.

Thus it seems that the climax of our own development, and the climax of efficiency for influencing others to their betterment are reached in the same act. Those who have had experience in evangelical work have declared that the spectacle of unrequited labors and undeserved suffering (on Calvary or elsewhere) is the greatest of all reforming and saving motives. The supreme effort of the will, by which it submits to that which is cruel and unjust in order to benefit others, is at once self-denial and self-assertion, and also becomes the most honorable, beautiful, attractive, persuasive. Thus supreme egoism and supreme altruism are conjoined. And in no other way could they be attained.

"He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid on him": by this he was perfected, and by this we are healed.

So much came by unjust suffering; and its story cannot be spared from the record, because its image cannot be spared from the ideal of character, nor its potency from the forces that contend against evil and in behalf of righteousness.

Future life, and God's life: The Transcendental. — But the newer theodicists have not done with us yet. They foresee that the future must be like the past. The same law by which we came to this place and time must prevail everywhere and forever. A growing life (and we must always grow) must, in the nature of the case, have its periods of conflict. Yea, more still, when we have attained to love, we shall find love itself is not all peace. Love is that which "suffereth long . . . beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things"; and because of these it is the greatest of all things.

Accordingly the bold prophets of the new theodicy declare not only that evil must be in our human life here and hereafter, but in the divine life also. Whether or not the

reasoning may be carried so far, as by Mr. Hinton, Dr. C. C. Hall, and Professor Royce, let those say who know. At any rate these men tell us that this law is universal; the good must suffer now and always, the whole creation groans and travails; Christ was crucified from the foundation of the world; God enters into all our sorrows and griefs and pains so fully that he suffers exactly as we do; he is in hell with all that make their bed in hell, and he strives with us against the powers of evil; "He sends not sorrow and trouble, he sends sympathy." And only when we consent that he shall bear our burden with us, does the yoke become easy and the burden light.

Yet, after all, the burden is a dreadful one. When it was laid on Christ, he could not carry it, and the soldiers compelled one Simon of Cyrene to carry it for him. But it is also said that on the same cross he was then lifted up, in order that he might draw all men unto him; and, for the joy of doing so, he had consented to all the pain.

This, we are told, is the eternal way of love.

6. SUMMARY, WITH REFERENCE TO GOODNESS IN NATURE.

First, we have fully recognized the power of the pessimist's argument: we have sought to know and declare the worst. We can no longer be accused of a "jesuitical attempt to defend (or gloss over) moral enormities."[1] We acknowledge also that the old theodicy is dead. So much the pessimist has effectively accomplished.

Secondly, on examining his evidence and arguments, we find grave errors in philosophy and logic. His fundamental conception as to the nature of the First Cause is irrational and unthinkable. In the statement of facts he has grossly exaggerated the evil, he has taken the part for the whole, and has misrepresented the part. After all, he has not so much reasoned as scolded.

Thirdly, we have tried to remove some of the rubbish which the contending parties

[1] Mill's *Three Essays*, pp. 186–87.

have brought together, and we have looked around for real and valid material with which to construct a theory of things as they are. To begin with, we find that there is a nature of things, and that accordingly some things are possible and some are not. This nature came from God's, its processes are his processes, and its fundamental limitations are his. In essentials this is the best possible world. If there is any evil in it that comes apart from men's wills, it is so because it could not be wisely avoided, and if any by man's will, it is because man so wills, and because he must be allowed free choice.

Contemplating the conditions under which the great work of this world seems to be undertaken, we cannot see how the perfection of character could be otherwise reached than by allowing evil a measure of power over the righteous, and indeed such a measure as may at times involve the suffering of the innocent. That is to say, so far as we can see, God had the alternative: either give up the attempt to perfect the human character, or allow man to be a fiend to some extent, to do all the

terrible things in history and the more terrible things that could not be written, in order that good may come — "at last, far off, at last, to all."

But if God must allow evil in the world, he has also utilized it to its own destruction, making it a servant of righteousness. God so arranged his plan as to use the ills of nature, and the cruelties of man toward man, for the training and discipline of the race. As often as "they mean it for evil he means it (or will use it) for good."

Such a plan, however, will inevitably have on the surface the appearance of designing or intending evil. Just as a prudent man engaged in a dangerous business takes out an accident policy; and when unavoidable sickness or calamity befalls, he collects the insurance and pays the doctor's bills, and so makes the best of it. But he did not bring on the accident for that purpose, and he would have prevented it if possible.

Conclusion of the Argument from Nature. — While, therefore, God is not the author of sin, and while "He doth not willingly afflict

nor grieve the children of men;" yet for wise reasons he has turned over to man a region of life where he may learn to be master, lord and creator, but where he sometimes prefers to be devil. That is the full account of sin. And as for other evil, to the question, Does God send trouble? we can only reply, Yes, such as he must. So Scripture and nature teach in terms not to be voided nor doubted. You may call this "necessity" or "limitation of God's power"—yet also, in the sequel, he triumphs over necessity and makes it serve him. And all this severity which he "is compelled" to use is "but the wisdom of his love" by which he will make us glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted us and the years wherein we have seen evil.

God is love.

II.

THE NATURE OF LOVE IN GOD, AS AGAINST THEOLOGICAL PESSIMISM.

Definitions. — The second attack on the character of God is made mostly by "orthodox" authorities and is based on a consideration of the divine attributes themselves. We therefore begin the study of this variety of pessimism with definition of the attributes involved.

Righteousness is defined as conformity to the moral law.

Justice, by some regarded as the same, is more often used in a narrower sense, as righteousness in executing or administering the law, or specifically in dealing with sin.

Holiness, in creatures especially, is not quite the same as righteousness. It differs in both meaning and application. Righteousness is applied to persons only (and to their acts), and holiness is applied to persons

and things, as to the priests and the implements of the Temple of the Church. Secondly, righteousness is conformity to standards, while holiness means consecrated to God and sacred to him, or worthy of reverence and honor. Something of this distinction is retained when the words apply to God. He is righteous as carrying out the law and exemplifying it; he is holy as the being whom we ought to revere and honor.

Goodness has a large meaning, which includes all moral excellence of whatever name; and a smaller meaning, about which there is some difference of opinion — to be noted below.

Love has less often the same large meaning with goodness, and more often the limited meaning. It will therefore be convenient, under the word love, to study the variations of opinion which now require attention.

THE DISCUSSION.

1. *Is God's love different from ours?* — Some allege that God's love must be different from our human love, in two great and essential

respects: it is infinite, and it is wise. On general principles, they say, the infinite must be radically, and otherwise, so unlike the finite that there can be no comparison between them; and "we might better use another name for the faculty in God which corresponds to love in man." Or, if we continue to use the same word, we must reckon with the fact that the deeds of a loving man bear no resemblance to those of a loving God; or what a man would call unlovely might be done by a God of love.

To all such reasoning the reply of Dr. Momerie seems to be complete and final. He says that as infinite space and finite space are not two different things, nor even two kinds of space, but are simply more and less; and as infinite time and finite time are more and less time, so infinite love and finite love are more and less love. In the oft-repeated words of the poet, —

> "Nothing can be good in him
> Which evil is in me."

To these, we may add, when we have

looked over the whole ground, that all the reasons we have for believing that God is good are reasons for believing that he is good and loving *in our sense of the words.*

This is especially true with regard to the claim that God's goodness or love is different from ours in that it is wise. They say that a good man would incline to forgive all sin, remit punishment and receive the criminal into free grace; but God sees the danger of such dealing with sin, and knows that the welfare of all calls for a very different treatment of the sinner.

This distinction is evidently set up between the wise God and the foolish man. Between these two there *is* a difference of kind; but between the wise God and a wise man, there is no such distinction. The wise human judge does not discharge all prisoners that come before him; but so well as he can he judges who is guilty, and imposes on him a fitting punishment, having in mind the welfare of the prisoner and the best interests of all people. The real difference between God and the wise human judge is that God sees

more of the nature of things and the interests of men and sees them more accurately, and can therefore more wisely direct the machinery of justice and law. This is not a difference of kind but of degree. Both of them act, to the extent of their ability, as wise lovers of mankind and of righteousness.

When we say that God is good or loving, we mean exactly (except for degree) what we mean when we say the same of man. So far, then, we are on familiar ground. People are more and more accustomed to this manner of speech.

All classes of thinkers, orthodox and heterodox, scientist, philosopher, agnostic, Christian and pagan, can be quoted to the same effect. Only the out and out pessimists and their kind object. Outside the Church men criticise the older and sterner notions of the Deity and declare that "God must at least be a gentleman," and that "we may trust the nobleness of the unknown."[1] Herbert Spencer[2] protests against the common notion

[1] Holyoake, *Trial of Theism*, p. iv.
[2] *First Principles* (Ed. 1900), p. 123.

of punishment as vindictive; "that which is called punishment is exhibited in nature as beneficent." And within the Church, the Fatherhood of God is now preached with all the fervor of a new revelation — as indeed it is, to many souls that have long been in the torment of doubt and fear.

2. *Is God's love finite?* — The prevailing modes of thought often represent the love of God (when the word is used in its human meaning) as limited, imperfect, finite. One of these modes, which is perhaps less common than it formerly was, regards love as limited in that it is nothing more or other than love — for instance, in that it is not power, righteousness, wrath, and so on. That is to say, it is "limited to itself," and if limited, therefore finite.

No doubt language can be so used; but only at a great disadvantage. For, if love were also other attributes, say wrath and hate, or were liable to change into them, it would thereby lose all worth or value — if not all meaning whatsoever. On the other hand, a love that *is* love, and cannot become anything

else, is the really perfect love, unlimited, infinite. In short, when the word is used in its human meaning, then only has it any true sense.

An equally vain assertion of the finiteness of love, as we use the word, is based on its lack of self-sufficiency. What is perfect, they say, cannot lack anything, but such is the nature of love that it *needs* or *must have* something to love. Thus its very nature depends for completeness on another. And that which is needy and dependent cannot be infinite.

To this may be replied as before, that in an "absolute" meaning the word infinite may be so used, but it leads to folly. We choose, therefore, another meaning, and since the nature of love is to go forth to others, therefore a love that is self-sufficient (self love) is a distinctly lower grade. In the very fact that it does not seek another, it is imperfect, limited, finite. Once more, therefore, we must infer that the human love of God is infinite in the only fit understanding of the word.

On this point we conclude, then, that infinite love can no more do an unlovely thing than infinite knowledge can know that twice two is five.

There is, however, another point of view from which it is asserted that there is at least one limitation to God's love, namely, *the unloveliness of some objects.* "It cannot be that God loves the man who has willfully made himself a brute and a fiend, so much as he loves a saint, for the very simple reason that such a one is not so lovely as the saint, is indeed quite unlovely."

Several replies have been made to this, but the following seems to put the matter in a clear light. It is merely that another variation of meaning is involved. Love often means no more than to be pleased with a beautiful object, but also it means a desire to do good. In the first meaning the statement of limitation is quite true; no doubt God sees in a hideous monster of human depravity a most unpleasing object. But in the second meaning God may be none the less a lover of the sinner than of the saint. Indeed,

his love may be all the more active toward the sinner; as the faithful mother gives the whole energy of love to her unfortunate child or to her wayward son, and as we are told in the parable, the Good Shepherd will leave the ninety and nine that are safe in the fold and will go forth to seek the single wanderer. It does not appear then that the unloveliness of the sinner is a limitation of God's love in the sense here contemplated.

Are love and justice antagonistic? — The chief limitation alleged is to be seen in the nature of God as related to sin. It is said, his goodness would incline him to pardon all sinners irrespective of their guilt, yet his justice would lead him to punish them all, as they deserve; and therefore in practice he makes a compromise; he punishes some according to justice, and pardons others according to mercy. Thus the doctrine that God is love, is limited by the doctrine that "God is a consuming fire."

That this antagonism exists in God's nature is further attested, they say, by his works. Throughout the world, it is mani-

fest that evil dominates in the lives of some men, and good in others. God is clearly actuated by different motives in dealing with different men. Still more, in the teaching of "orthodoxy," the different treatment of men (blessing some and damning others) is not merely of this earth and for a time, but is to continue forever. Here, they say, is manifest a real permanent, everlasting limitation.

Quite to the contrary we have seen (in the study of theodicy) nothing in the works of God that indicates any malice in his disposition, nor any defect of goodness. After the fullest and fairest consideration, we have decided that nature at the very worst seems to be ordered by a loving mind. We shall, therefore, regard that case as closed, and that part of the present argument which is drawn from nature we shall not here consider as having any value toward proving that God's love is limited.

There remains the alleged antagonism in the natures of love and justice. What shall we say to that?

First, that if we are right in understanding

the works of God this very absence of evidence favoring antagonism is itself important evidence against the existence of such antagonism. In other words, if God had malice or even indifference in his disposition, the fact would be likely to appear in his works and in a manner not explicable on the ground of pure benevolence. — But, lest we press this consideration beyond the faith of the less confident, we turn to the other matters.

Before the ground is quite clear, I must once more protest against a misconception of the nature of love. A few pages above, theologians were quoted as objecting to the comparison of God with a foolish man who would forgive all and punish no one. But now in this connection they do the very thing they objected to, or worse: they declare that God's goodness is just the kind that would discharge all prisoners. I repeat therefore that we have no evidence that God is any such a being. But in nature and in revelation we learn that his love is entirely wise, and therefore both tender and severe, both kind and just, and infinitely both. It

is the lovingkindness[1] of God which renders to every man according to his works. God's justice and mercy are not two things, but one thing, said Peter Lombard. Dr. Samuel Harris says, "God is as benevolent in punishing as he is in blessing."

Human intelligence thoroly resents the idea of limits in the nature of God; and the conscience refuses to admit any limitation of his goodness. Our combined reasons for believing in the thorogoing goodwill of God are so strong that we seem to have no right to so understand love and justice as to represent them in antagonism. There can be no "war in the members" of God. It cannot be true that his love calls for one thing and his justice for another, and that there is strife between them, and compromise. Rather, it must be that the whole God acts at once and consistently; and any intepretation of scripture or philosophy, that makes them to teach otherwise, is open to suspicion, to say the least. If, therefore, we can find a rational view of the facts, by which

[1] *Psalms* lxii, 12.

we can avoid supposing there is confusion in God, such a theory would manifestly have much to commend it.

Among the modern "orthodox" the situation has been to some extent apprehended. Hence they have taught that God really loves all and *would save all if he could*, but as a matter of fact he cannot save all his children. "He will," they say, "succeed in saving some of them, but in order to do even that he must allow the others to take the consequences of their sin and to perish. They perish not because God has not the *disposition* to save them, but because he has not the *power* to save them.

This theory like that of Leibnitz defends God's love at the expense of his power, and must be preferred to the alternative of defending his power at the expense of his love. — If there were occasion, I should pursue the topic further, and show that, after all, it is only in the old and irrational sense that *power* must be regarded as finite. In the proper and rational sense God's power is infinite. For the present, however, we are

content to accept the theologians' statement that God's alleged failures are not due to his lack of love.

Practical limitations. — I have not found in modern theology any other assertion of limited divine goodness, which has not been fairly included or involved in what has now been said; but there is one remaining consideration which is often regarded as bearing on our main question. It may be expressed as follows: "True, God's love is unlimited in its nature, but it is limited in effect. For example, it is thwarted and insulted by every sin of man, pained and defeated by every sorrow (especially if undeserved), and it will be so forever with reference to every soul that shall be finally lost. And it might as well be called limited in nature, if it is constantly and forever balked and defeated; at any rate, it is practically limited."

Of the nature and occasion of these "practical limitations," so far as they are temporary, we have made adequate study under the head of theodicy. They are incident to the development of the human race in this

world; they are parts of the administration of the great training school in which we are all placed. Some we know are apt pupils and make faithful and rapid progress. Others are dull, or naughty, in varying degrees. On all of us the great teacher spends much labor with patience and sympathy.

All these may in some sense be called limitations. Yet, as I have suggested, the absence of them would be greater limitation. If God did not labor for and sympathize with his needy and afflicted children, then indeed he would be imperfect. As the facts are, they signify his perfection or infinity.

The only recourse left to the pessimist, is to claim that God's inability to change the circumstances (so as to avoid occasions of labor and sympathy) is proof of his limitation of power. — This claim as to power I have refused to discuss, protesting however, that it is empty. At any rate, it has no vital relation to our present purpose, it marks no limitation of God's moral nature.

But, an objector will say, "this may be all true of what lasts for a while only; tempo-

rary obstacles are stepping-stones to higher life, but if the delay be eternal, the obstacle be insurmountable, then in the very words it is no stepping-stone, we can never get it under our feet. It will forever block our way. It is a real defeat of God, and not a mere lower stage in development or education. A temporary defeat may in God's wisdom be some day turned into final victory. But, of course, no wisdom can change a final defeat. If there is anything of that description, it is unexplained, it remains forever a blemish on God's work. It marks a serious limitation of his power and wisdom, such as amounts to a defeat of his love."

On the other hand, one may ask whether there is any evidence for permanent hindrances, obstacles that even God cannot overcome. Certainly the existence of a temporary delay is no such evidence. Just as in a school that man keeps, the fact that the children have not yet become learned, is no proof that they will never become learned; so in the school that God keeps, present imperfections cannot prove endless imperfec-

tions. Dr. Hodge used to argue in behalf of endless sin and punishment with the question, "How do we know that the reasons for the existence of sin here and now may not hold for all time, and so justify its existence there and forever?" He might as well ask how do we know that the reasons why a child is at present ignorant of algebra, may not hold forever, and therefore the child will never know algebra.

Equally vain is that other favorite claim of "orthodox" pessimists, that real samples are found in this life, of men who have reached a permanent state of evil character. As Joseph Cook used to say, there is "a tendency of sin to produce final permanence of evil character," which tendency is actually realized in many who have pursued a long course of sin. Those, at least, have already accomplished the defeat of God, which cannot be turned into victory.

In reply, the Universalist appeals to the facts — as better understood. No doubt there is such a tendency, but there is another tendency, older than this, and very power-

ful, even after all the "orthodox" have said to the contrary. It is the will of God — which may upset calculations that tend toward evil.

Moreover, as a matter of fact, there is no known case of permanence or fixity in evil. On the contrary, a great number of the worst men (so far as experts can judge) have been reformed. Medical reports show that in extreme cases the pernicious effects of sin reach their natural consummation in the complete bondage of the will, the dethronement of the intellect and the destruction of moral character. Asylums and hospitals throng with examples of "criminal insane" who have come to that condition by some course of vice. Formerly such people were thought to be hopelessly lost, but now by means of the science of medicine they are mostly curable. Dr. R. O. Mason[1] says that effects are now produced such as would have been thought miraculous a few years ago. These marvels are wrought by good care, infinite patience, hypnotism, bichloride

[1] *North American Review*, Oct., 1896, pp. 448–455.

of gold, or other medicines and devices known to science. A single case may be summarized for an example from the report of F. W. H. Meyers, secretary of the Society for Physical Research. In the summer of 1884, there was in the hospital of Salpétriere, a young woman of a low type, a criminal lunatic, filthy in habits and violent in demeanor, and with a lifelong history of impurity and theft. One of the physicians of the hospital staff undertook to hypnotize her at a time when she could be kept quiet only by a straight-jacket and a continual cold douche on her head. For a while she would not look at the operator, but raved and spat on him. The physician, however, kept his face close to hers and followed her eyes wherever she moved them. In a quarter of an hour she was asleep and under some measure of control, tho talking incoherently. Practically nothing was accomplished the first day except the control. This experiment was repeated and extended day after day and the control increased, until she would do some few things sanely while in

the hypnotic state, though she raved when awake. Gradually, however, the sane action was extended into her waking life. At first she would do nothing more than such simple acts as sweeping her room. These were increased one by one, until after two years' treatment her life is wholly sane, normal, reformed. She is now a new woman and of such character that she is trusted as a hospital nurse in care of other patients.

Many other examples might be quoted of the healing of moral diseases of the gravest order. We are told that more than three-quarters of such cases are curable, by means already in the hands of man.

It seems, therefore, entirely legitimate to ask a question: If man, with time confined to the short span of the life of the body, and with a slight knowledge of the laws of life and mind, can cure three-fourths of the "permanent" cases, cannot God, with infinite time and wisdom, be trusted to cure the other one-fourth?

It must be a very slender faith that hesitates over that question. If God's power

were limited quite as much as any "orthodox" theologian ever dared allege, he must still have power enough to save the remaining quarter of lost souls. What has become of the God that used to be called Almighty, and in whose hands men are "as clay in the hands of a potter?" The prophet Jeremiah, who seems to have had a profound knowledge of the power of evil, was yet able to write,[1] "Thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power . . . there is nothing too hard for Thee." In modern times only "heterodox" prophets talk that way.

No, those "practical limitations" which are supposed to last forever are a mere figment of the imagination. Their existence is opposed to every idea of God that in any manner resembles the God of the Bible. There are, indeed, temporary hindrances in the accomplishment of his purposes with men, due to human free will. In the words of Dr. Gordon, "The grace of God is temporarily resistible, ultimately irresistible" — though not by compulsion yet by persuasion, which

[1] *Jeremiah* xxxii, 17.

in its cumulative power becomes some day "practically" irresistible. Such is the meaning of words of necessity in every scheme containing free will.

On this point we can, in good reason, grant no more to the friends of pessimism, than that in God's school some children have not yet learned all their lessons.

Summary of pessimism as a whole. We have examined the course of nature, taking account of all kinds of evil, and have found the works of God are altogether benevolent. Secondly, we have considered the attributes of God as revealed to his children and have found in them no sign of ill nor defeat of goodness. All things are at least consistent with the theory of goodness, and many things are consistent with no other theory, but require and enforce the most optimistic and joyful faith.

APPENDIX.

A suggestion to those who still sit in the shadow. — The above is the conclusion to which we have come by the use of such intelligence as we have. We are aware, however, that others exist who, having the same evidence, yet draw a different conclusion. But, if the evidence is the same, the different conclusion must arise from mental constitution, as colored glasses give a tinge to all things seen. It was some pigment in Schopenhauer's blood that tinged the world for him. And there is, I think, something the same in the blood of our good friends, the professional reformers, who often tell us that society is rotten to the core, the world is rapidly going to the dogs, and the best that any of us can do is to hold it back a little, and await the bitter end which is sure to come ere long.

Is it not the same with the theologians, with the prophets of evil generally, and with the ordinary Christian, embittered with toils and cares and hard pressed with evils which seem about to destroy him and his beloved? To him the world has seemed to be a fleeting show for man's delusion given, it is the kingdom of the devil and not of God. To him there is either no God at all or a weak one who cannot complete what he improvidently began to build. To men of that disposition I would say it is not in the facts, not in good reason, but in some unfortunate element of your constitution, that you see nature as Schopenhauer sees it, and see man as Nordau and Nietzeche see him, and interpret the very words of Jesus as containing dire forebodings of endless wrath. While this taint remains in your blood you will continue to think the optimistic temper to be frivolous and its reasoning shallow. You will continue to suspect and contend against your own better instincts, which, because they are fundamentally Christian are often moving you to take a brighter view of the world and of God.

When in response to those instincts you pray that all men may know God from the least unto the greatest, you will yet confess with sorrow that it cannot be. There is in you this contest between your heart's desire and your knowledge (as it seems to you) based on the traditional understanding of certain Scripture texts. But St. Paul teaches that the greatest thing is love. And in modern days Browning also "shows you a more excellent way." He says to the man who finds knowledge and love to be in conflict:

> "Wholly distrust thy knowledge, then, and trust,
> As wholly, love allied to ignorance!
> There lies thy truth and safety."

According to the same principle the leaders in the "new anthropology," or study of man, have shown us that we ought sometimes to be *willfully* optimistic, to purposely contend against the suggestions of evil, and this may be especially wise in case those suggestions contain anything derogatory to the divine perfections. Such is the significance of what

has been quoted from Professor James, to the effect that in case our faculties of judgment cannot decide some question of vital interest, we do well to allow our better emotions to tip the scale and decide for us in behalf of the optimistic conclusion. As a general truth, the value we give to any vital course of reasoning depends largely on temperament. We do, as a matter of fact, reason less by thinking than by feeling; and, on the whole perhaps we ought to do so, yet not to the exclusion of thinking. Feeling or passion must often decide the reason, and if the passion be unmixed holy and righteous, its decision will be true and will stand the severest tests of logic.

It must be true — that which we pray for with the whole soul, that which has inspired the most glorious visions of the saints, that of which it is prophesied "He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied" — How much will it take to satisfy or fill full the infinite! "That which ought to be true must be true."

To speak with examples, some have re-

marked the great bodily and mental change produced by getting rid of anger and worry, and that, too, merely by an act of the will. A recent book on Varieties of Religious Experience[1] illustrates the almost miraculous power that a state of mind has to change the face of nature and even the very facts of nature, especially the meaning or value they have to our thought.

In short, to those who can receive it, psychology seems to declare that pessimism is one of the lingering effects of moral disease not yet cast off or outgrown, but against which some of us must yet contend for a while. Hence, for some, Dr. Bradford[2] has the right word when he says "*Hope*, as a duty." Learn the lesson of Job and assert that God is good, contrary to evidence, and so win his blessing of a mighty faith and of its abundant peace.

Others, by grace, have risen above that which is merely duty, and have the full con-

[1] By William James, who quotes on page 181, Fletcher's *Menticulture or the ABC of True Living* (1899), p. 26-36.

[2] *Age of Faith*, pp. 233–67.

fidence of faith in the power and goodwill of God. By grace and faith St. Paul was "persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God." [1]

By such grace one may have faith to look forward and believe in "the restoration of all things whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been from of old" [2]; and in those other words, whereby God, so to speak, binds himself with an oath. "As I live, saith the Lord, to me every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess and give praise to God." [3]

[1] *Romans* viii, 38–39. [2] *Acts* iii, 21.
[3] *Romans* xiv., 11, and *Ephesians* ii, 10–11.

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